

Teaming with promise

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

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Mathematical pedantry on hold, Team 7 plus 17-Bit Software equals Team 17. That's the abridged edition origin story of everyone's favourite worm-peddlers in a nutshell.

Before they grabbed the face of Amiga gaming by the lugholes and trowelled on a copious layer of glossy glitz and glamour, Team 17 were two separate entities. A tiny Swedish games development outfit known as Team 7 International, and 17-Bit Software, a PD distribution library and publisher based in Wakefield, co-founded by Michael Robinson and Martyn Brown. "That *bit* better than the rest" to begin with, their fusion laid down the foundations for nearly three decades worth of plauditory and prosperity.



Anyone familiar with Amiga gaming's glory years will be firmly acquainted with eminent Team 17 titles such as Alien Breed, ATR, Super Stardust, Worms, Overdrive, Superfrog, Body Blows, Assassin, Qwak and Project-X.

Team 7's one and only game, Miami Chase, not so much. Pre-merger, their top-down racing game, published by Codemasters, didn't burn nearly enough rubber to join the ranks of Team 17's later classics. Or perhaps it *did* and that's why it failed to gain much *traction*. Ah, so many marvellous motoring metaphors, I can't decide which should take pole position. To avoid getting sidetracked I better pitstop them all for now.



Comprising coders Andreas Tadic, Peter Tuleby, and Stefan Boberg, graphician, Rico Holmes, and musicians Allister Brimble and Jimmy Fredriksson, Team 7 were a sixsome with... oh. That's not it then.

A brazen Miami Vice clone (the one by Ocean, not Capstone), Chase was promoted as Codemasters' first two disk game, yet still retailed for a decidedly budgety £7.99. That being their forte from day one. Accordingly, the price was slashed in half for the 8-bit ports to the Spectrum and Commodore 64.



Written by James Cornelius Bowi

In the American TV series that aired between 1984 and 1989 Don Johnson starred as undercover detective James 'Sonny' Crockett, alongside his Metro-Dade Police Department partner, Philip Michael Thomas playing Ricardo 'Rico' Tubbs.

On-screen Don drove a couple of Ferraris; a Daytona Spyder 365 GTS/4 and a Testarossa. The Spyder was actually a replica built on the chassis of a Chevrolet Corvette C3, but that's beside the point. Many *other* luxurious performance cars and a Scarab offshore power-boat were paraded in the show. That's *also* beside the point.

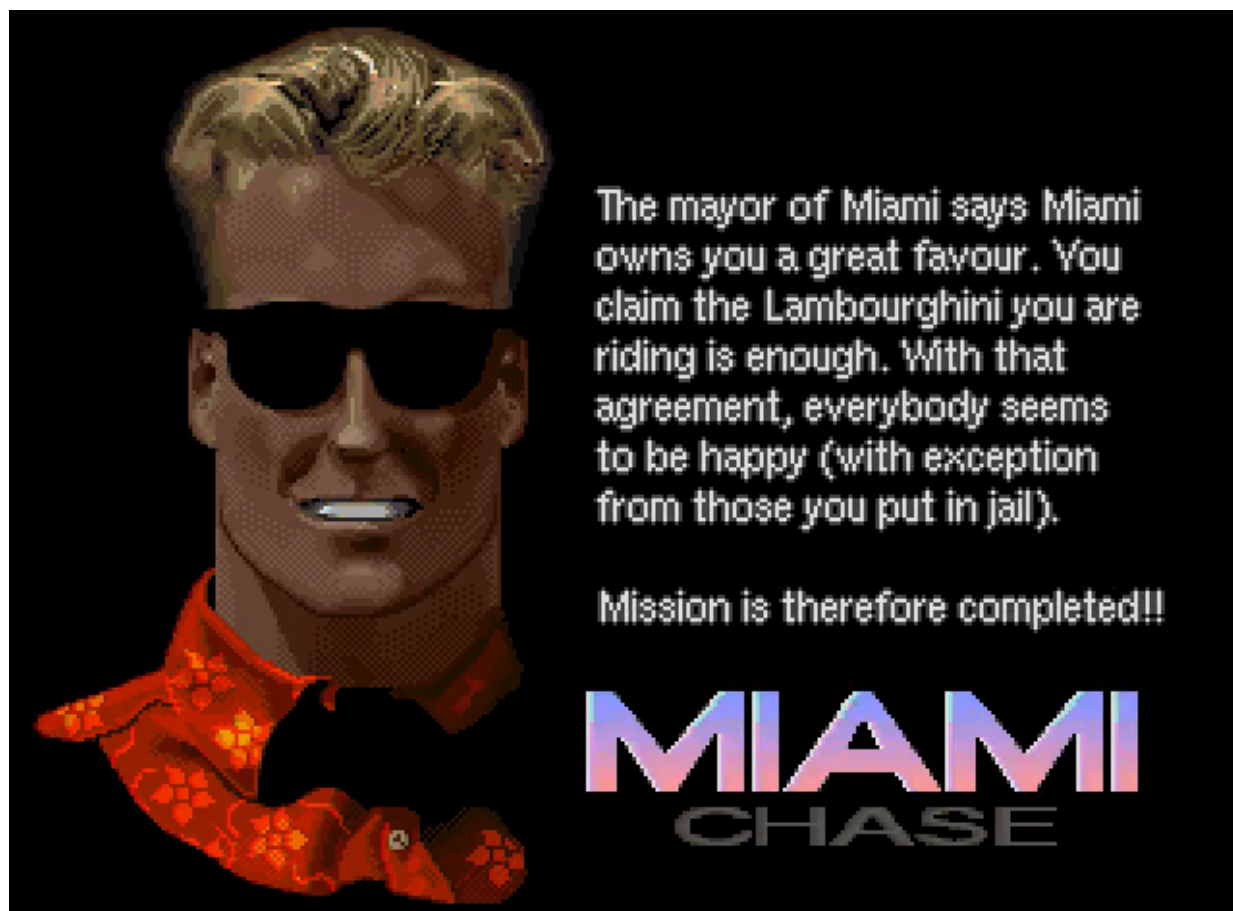
In defiance of Team 7's interpretation being an (alternating) *two*-player affair, we're only introduced to solo undercover drug enforcement agency officer, Don Ferrari.



It's unlikely to be coincidental that he drives a Ferrari. This time a white F40 model...



...Or is it? The finale screen says it's a Lamborghini. I imagine Phillip Firebird was on leave during the casting so didn't make the cut. :|



Your only goal is to patrol the mean streets of Miami, shunting or shooting drug-pushing scum out of existence, having tracked them down via radar. When filming of the TV show began, Miami wasn't quite so glamorous as it is today; the producers played a significant role in dragging it out of the gutter.

There are five levels worth of streets to cleanse and you have 48 hours in which to do it. After that, your police immunity expires and it's back to playing by the rules... and where has that ever got anybody?

Ideally civilian and police vehicles are to be avoided, whilst it's permanently open season for red ones. These underling goons must be exterminated first, leaving the path clear to arrest the head honchos of the crime syndicate. These

underworld barons are also helpfully colour-coded - conveniently they all drive yellow Corvettes.

I expect we intend to whip out the thumbscrews to extract pertinent information on their crooked cronies' concerns.

Remember I said *ideally* avoided? Innocent bystanders *can* be maimed Carmageddon style - nonchalantly running through red lights to catch them unawares - and the police will actually apologise for mistakenly pulling you over. Whoever said police corruption doesn't have its benefits?



Accumulated points are your currency to be spent in garages, adding mines to your default magnum weapon arsenal, or upgrading/repairing your vehicle. Goodies on offer include the turbo system, body panels, oil tanks, sure tyres, oil

cannons, glass, power steering, fuel injection, armour, and wheelblades.

Spend wisely and you can soup-up your ride to improve the handling and longevity of the standard-issue Ferrari. Useless things! Not much better than Skodas really.



While playing Whac-A-Mole with drug dealers soon becomes repetitive, Miami Chase is a fun way to blast away ten-minute bursts of free time. For a £7.99 budget game it's remarkably polished; the 8-way smooth scrolling and classy title music incandescent beacons of quality, a teasing indicator of better things to come.

Check under the bonnet and you'll recognise the best elements of Chase transplanted into Overdrive, for instance.

And according to Tadic (via Team17.com), "Alien Breed ran on vastly enhanced technology, originally developed for Miami Chase".



As impressive as it is you'd think someone might have run the text on the back of the box and in-game interstitial screens through a spelling and grammar checker. There's also a confusing degree of sloppy inconsistency between what's written in the manual and what we witness on screen, suggesting that Codemasters needed to consult the developers more often than was apparently the case.

Vehicle control is a bit odd in that you slide around the roads as if gliding across ice, while there are no winter-themed tracks in evidence. You get used to it, and I suppose you *could* argue it's all part of the challenge. Instant precision

control would make for a very easy, boring game, and let's face it, the gameplay is pretty hollow to begin with.

On first booting the game we're kept amused by what in an arcade game you'd call the 'attract mode'. Cars speed back and forth over a crossroad junction displaying no acknowledgement whatsoever of one another's presence. With no collision detection or traffic lights to control the flow, they pass straight through solid steel without flinching. That's a tad slapdash.



Some of the other early combat-car games - Chicago 90, Motor Massacre, APB, the unreleased Crime Inc. et al - more closely resemble GTA, though who knows? Miami Chase

may have had a bearing on DMA's not-really-trailblazing runaway success, despite not being able to exit your vehicle to explore the arenas on foot.

In that vein, you have to wonder how much the art deco style and new wave cinematography of Miami Vice influenced Team 7 and subsequently Team 17. With Michael Mann at the helm insisting on micro-managing the presentation right down to the pastel-only colour scheme and trend-setting dress code, the show was aimed at the MTV generation rather than crime drama aficionados seeking gritty realism. For that reason it was often accused of being too light and fluffy; all style and no substance.

Team 17 - on the contrary - managed to back up their slick vogue with genuine gameplay. I can't think of a single title from their back-catalogue that could be dismissed as a tech demo shrouded with the veneer of a supposedly playable game. What a Shadow that would have cast over their legacy.